

ANDROID™
NETRUNNER™
THE CARD GAME
THE LIBERATED MIND

"The Eyes of the World are Upon You..." As national elections loom in the Indian Union, debate rages over granting clones full citizenship. A shadow war begins, and Jinteki will stop at nothing to make sure their most lucrative product remains just that: a product. With this cycle you can explore the largest megapolis in India, and expand your decks in novel ways with new consumer grade hardware and corporate alliances.

NEW SYMBOLS

The following new symbols appear on cards and stand for the four corporations:

HB: Haas-Bioroid

: NBN

: Jinteki

: Weyland Consortium

THE LIBERATED MIND

"We must be calm, in this place of all places. Pray silence, meditate for a moment, and then we shall talk."

Guru Davinder's *atman* grew brighter as he spoke, filling the virtual temple with golden light. A staircase of light appeared before him, and at each step his flowing beard and robes swayed, leaving a musical resonance upon the sim. The Temple of White Light was not of Davinder's creation, but he alone had mastered the space so that it reacted much like his own environment, a feat only equaled by Guru Shantala herself.

The five elders were at once quietened and took their places once more, floating in the chambers of contemplation within the shimmering crystalline temple.

"Now," said Guru Davinder, his *atman* projecting an aura of soothing calm, "let Ula speak. What is it that requires the attention of the sanctum, my child?"

Ula was unlike the others. She was a servant of the Temple of the Liberated Mind, one of the few trusted employees of an academy whose power and wealth had grown steadily over the years. She rarely intruded on the incorporeal space of her employers, unless the need was urgent. Her avatar was too like her physical form—a sign of her inexperience in cyberspace. Her sparkling amber eyes—perfect facsimiles of her physical g-mods—fixed upon the glowing form of Guru Davinder.

"I am sorry to cause alarm in this place of tranquility, but I have today received a message from a man calling himself 'Nero.' He claims to have information of government corruption that will be of direct interest to the temple. He will say no more than this until we have transferred a great deal of credits to his account. I

am uploading all we know about this Nero now so that you may better understand my concern."

The elders paused momentarily as they received the data.

"It would seem as though this man is not to be trifled with, and that he is not in the habit of making false claims. Swami Tirtha—your thoughts?"

"This Nero is an infobroker, a criminal," said Swami Tirtha. His *atman* was a beautiful youth even though Tirtha had been with the temple since its inception and was an old man. "If this information was obtained through illegal means, then by agreeing to his demands we would be complicit in a crime. Those who oppose our work here would seize such a transgression."

"Whatever the politicians of Mumbad squabble over, it cannot be of interest to us," Alfassa spoke out of turn. Her *atman* was an androgynous figure, with four vestigial ghost arms that trailed behind her every gesticulation, on the fringes of perception. "The temple's neutrality is key to its purity. If we are seen to engage in politics, we upset the balance we have striven so hard to achieve. We put the temptation of worldly desire within reach of our disciples. These external forces may yet infect this sanctum with their corruption."

"Our disciples would do well to overcome these tests, as have we all. We are still a part of the world, even if we exist beyond it." These words came from Anandamayī, who took the form of a black-robed crone, eyeless and yet all-seeing. "To pretend that we cannot be affected by the physical is as fruitless as pretending that the physical cannot be guided by the spiritual. Without knowledge, we cannot decide."

"The knowledge itself places the temple in danger," said Swami Tirtha, his eyes deepening in color as his mood shifted to agitation.

"Be calm," said Guru Davinder. "Remember that here, in this place, we are one. And more than that, we can see more than even this 'Nero' could guess, should we choose to."

"We do not delve into the affairs of the world. It is against the laws of the sanctum," Alfassa chided.

"Indeed, and it shall stay so," replied Davinder. "But if Ula were to explore this matter on our behalf? Perhaps then we could decide."

You have already decided, guru. Until now, Srivastava had stayed silent. His form was as stone, impassive as granite. He rarely

spoke, and even when he did his thoughts transcended voice, lighting the datastream in a language felt rather than heard.

"Ah, my old friend. You understand my own weaknesses more than anyone. What would you advise?"

You must not bring this darkness into the sanctum, but you cannot remain while the darkness calls to you. Srivastava's voice was an echo on the wind. Ula held her head as though her digital form was somehow able to feel discomfort. Davinder merely nodded.

"My trusted companions, Srivastava speaks the truth as always. I will leave the sanctum and return to the flesh, so as not to sully our sacred space with these matters. When I return, know that whatever trouble would find our door shall be dealt with. Until then, meditate on these and other matters, and pray that your transcendence lends us all strength."

The elders bowed and bade farewell to Davinder, who faded from the sanctum along with Ula, taking their light with them.

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Davinder awoke to darkness confused, frightened. He was dimly aware of hands pulling at limbs he had forgotten he had, of blinking lights and susurrating machinery. His breathing was labored, stertorous, and he felt foreign apparatus pushing air into his lungs. Finally, a heavy visor was lifted from his eyes, and soft lights slowly raised until he could see, and remember.

Two robed servants helped the aged guru out of the stasis pod and onto his feet. He slipped on the tiled floor and almost stumbled, the knowledge of controlling physical limbs escaping him for a second. Nutriports hissed as they were uncoupled from spinal plugs. Electrodes were peeled gently from his brow. The room was small, dark and austere; burning joss sticks provided the only evidence that anyone had been in the room during his confinement.

"How...long?" he croaked. The weakness of his voice surprised him. A servant at once brought a cup of water to his lips.

"Ten months, guru," said the clone.

It was the longest he'd spent online to date, and coming back felt like a rude awakening. One day, he knew, he would stay there forever, living on even when this frail form was gone. But until then, something inside him always pulled him back. He would have to face that demon before he could truly count himself Guru Shantala's equal.

He looked down at his beard. It was almost at his knees now, and entirely grey. He stood patiently as the servants wrapped up his abundant silver hair into a white turban, and dressed him in his robes.

It was an hour before Guru Davinder was capable of granting Ula an audience.

"You did well, Ula," he said. "It was wise not to trouble the others with the full details. We will complete this investigation ourselves."

"Guru," she said. "I am blessed indeed to have your personal attention in this matter. May I have your permission to complete the transaction with Nero?"

"You may, my child. But tell me, have you found this poor girl that Nero spoke of? The sister of the politician?"

"I have, guru. Jesminder Sareen, formerly Jesminder Nattar. An orphan, and a talented runner. As far as our sources can tell, she already has the information from Nero."

"But he does not know how much we have already learned. This is good. Complete the transaction, my child, and prepare my console. Before this day is through, I wish to know everything."

Yes, something always pulled Davinder back to reality. This time, perhaps, would be the last time.

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